

~~1st Cav.~~

1st Dragoons

(2) c/c

Reminiscences of Some Incidents in the Career of an
United States Dragoon Between the Years 1839 and 1844

Enlisted on the 11th of December 1839, remained 10 days at Governors Island, New York Harbour, then sent to Carlisle, Pen., Barracks, a drilling Depot, or school of practice as it is called, The daily course of drill being thus, Reveille at day break, Stable Call 15 minutes after, which occupied 1 hour, Breakfast, Guard mounting at 9, drilling commenced immediately after. Carbine drill on foot until 11, Sabre exercise from 12 till 1. Dinner, at 2 Saddles up for Mounted drill, which lasted until $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour before sunset, Stable call 1 hour, Supper, the evening being spent in cleaning accoutrements, amusement etc. Tattoo at 9, signal to put out lights called Taps 15 minutes after. Be it remembered this was wintertime, the Guard duty was light only once in about 2 weeks, more for instruction than use. This Post was then under the Command of Captain E.V. Sumner, who before his death in 1863 was promoted to the rank of a Major General. On the 1st of May 1840, started to join the regiment at its Head Quarters at Fort Leavenworth on the

Missouri River, arriving there on the 28th May the route being rail road to Harrisburg, by Canal to Pittsburg, then Steam boat down the Ohio river, up the Mississippi, then up the Missouri. The Regiment containing 10 companies, the complement of each when full being 1 Captain, 2 Lieutenants, 4 Sergants, 4 Corporals, 60 privates, 2 buglers, 1 farrier, rank and file 71, Commissioned Officers 3. The regiment at this time was very much reduced requiring reinforcement of recruits. I was attached to Company H the Captain of which being Nathan Boone, (the youngest son of the celebrated Daniel Boone one of the first settlers of Kentucky afterwards of Missouri) in this I was fortunate, as a better or more experienced officer did not exist, who having crossed the Mississippi river with his father, he then 15 years old had not been East of it since, he was then about 60, spending his life in exploring the country, and surveying, in intercourse with the various Indian Tribes, he knew them all, could speak the dialect of each, had passed nearly the whole of his life in the open air, so as to give some plausibility to the opinion so commonly expressed, that he knew every inch of the land from the Mississippi river, to the Rocky Mountains

and yet with all this experience, he was the most kind, affable, and strictly honest Man, simple in his habits and manners, not refined except in that politeness which good nature inspires. The Company was composed of many young men of active habits, some of them of good literary abilities and others of skillfull Mechanical attainments each having his own reasons for enlisting which their Comrades never enquired into indeed it seemed a point of delicacy to let each one keep his reasons to himself. Then commenced that career of Adventure of exciting, fatiguing activity, but as a general thing pleasant, diverting my mind from my previous troubles. The free air and exercise furnishing a remedy to a troubled mind as well as stimulating. The Colonel of the regiment S.W.Kearney was the best exemplification of a republican Soldier possible, rigourously strict almost to severity, when on duty, but affable, just and kind, when off duty, my opinion may be biased by the favours received from him, but as that opinion is confirmed by that formed of him by all who had any intercourse with him it must be taken for granted. Our Operations being for the most part in frequent expeditions to compell the various tribes who were in hostility, to

abstain from actual Warfare, to punish those who outraged any persons sent there for their benefit or instruction. Generally we were a kind of forcible pacificators more than anything else, but when excesses were committed by them, by a prompt and efficient interference to subdue them to orderly Conduct. The trouble thus given to us was frequently excessive climbing mountains, swimming or fording rivers, traversing prairies, often under a burning Sun, at other times with Snow on the ground knee deep to the horses and consequently so as to obliterate all the trails or tracts, if any had ever been made, then it was that Captain Boone's talents were brought into action, he could find his way where few others could, it seemed intuitive in him, but it was not, it was the result of the close application of his observation of symptoms and the accumulated knowledge obtained by day by day experience. The faculty of knowing which way his face was turned, and the mental power power to continue in the direction required, as he had a habit of appearing abstracted, even when riding, May of the least intelligent thought he was asleep and dreamed his way, this of course was nonsense, he was only thinking or remembering. As he was very willing to instruct us in all that he knew, we became apt pupils and soon discovered what was his

principal guides, first and greatest the Sun, but there are times when there is no sunshine, then in passing through woods. The superior foliage or mosses on the South side of large trees was a guide, On the open prairie nature has provided a guide which without this instruction we would never have known called Pilot Grass it is a kind of Weed growing on the prairies, the edges of its leaves always presented to North and South, the flat of the leaves to the East and West, it is not very abundant but can be found in some places several times in a day. For crossing rivers and streams our Waggon of which each Company had one drawn by 6 mules for the purpose of carrying rations, camp equipage, etc. were so constructed that the body was made Water tight, so that it could be taken off, the running gear and used as a boat, the running gear then placed on it and Floated across the contents uninjured, the men either swimming their horses they riding on them as they marched, or unsaddling placing the saddles, bridles, etc. on the boat waggon, then making the horses swim unencumbered, the men crossing on the boat waggon sometimes we would improvise a bridge, if the stream was narrow and the banks high, by felling two large trees that would reach across, if they were convenient then fill up with

saplings to form a platform like a corduroy road, this made a very good temporary bridge answering our purpose. Then leave it until the next freshet would probably wash it away for these streams rise and fall very much and very rapidly. Our duty consisted of frequent journeys, some short, some long, varying from 2 to 93 days which was the longest I was engaged in, but in some of them I have been for 16 hours in the saddle without dismounting, and on one occasion 3 days without food. The extent of territory which this small force was expected to traverse and preserve order in was about 12 degrees of Latitude, and as many of Longitude, or rather the Latitude was infinite, it was from the boundary of Texas, Red River, on the south to the British possessions on the North, the Longitude being from the Missouri river on the East to the boundary of New Mexico which was the little Arkansas on the West. This being between the years 1839 and 1844, consequently before the United States acquired possession of all across the continent.

Some of the incidents

Land Privateering

The Texan government being at War (as they called it, in

fact, filibustering to obtain the country) started in Novel Manoeuvres in Warfare, of issuing letters of Marque for Land privateering, preying upon Mexican commerce, there being at that time an immense traffice carried on between the United States and Santa Fee in New Mexico. This traffice was carried on by trading parties of both countries who would combine for protection, and in company cross overland, something after the manner of an Asiatic caravan, the principal points of departure being Independence Missouri, in the United States, and Santa Fee, in New New Mexico, and thus called the Santa Fee trade; These caravans called trains, was the principal object of these Mauraders, who under the command of a General Warfield and a Colonel Snively, would attack them, and not discriminating very nicely between the property of Mexicans, or Americans, would plunder both, to put an end to this, a strong force of Dragoons were ordered to accompany the next train, as far as the boundary of New Mexico, then to be relieved by a Mexican force to escort them to their destination, accordingly 5 companies were ordered on this duty. Company H being at that time south of the Santa Fee trails, was ordered to join them at Hundred and Ten, one of the usual

camping places on the trail so called from its being 110 miles from Independence. This celebrated trail of which we had heard, and longed so much to see, we found to be no made road at all, but an immense Mire, in some places more than a Mile wide, where the original prairie ground had been so worn by the trains passing, that others following were obliged to take a wider range on to new grounds. This was the cause of the great width, however at the crossings of rivers they were obliged to converge so as to cross, there the banks, for more than a mile were worse still. Then was a scene of confusion, worse confounded, seldom surpassed, the correct line of waggons not being preserved, some would break off, out of the line so as to cross before others, then the imprecations and the fights, exceeded anything in my experience. The drivers of these teams were the refuse of all nations, Mexicans of the lowest classes, half breeds Indians, renegades, White Men, from the States who dare not be seen there again, all of the degraded portion of humanity, nothing better could be expected. Amid such scenes the route was pursued, the ludicrous part of it, relieving much of the tiresome monotony of prairie travels, but we little thought or knew

of the dangers we were surrounded by. One year after when on a pacific journey into Texas, we met with several persons who were in this Texan band of desperados, who informed us, that all through the journey we were watched on both sides of us. Warfields on one and Snively on the other, and that in the least division of our force, we would have been attacked, but with what success to them is very uncertain, as we had 2 Mountain Howitzers, which I supposed were the first that were ever brought into that part of the country, and they, the Texans, did not have any Artillery, so that the dread to them of the Howitzers, and we keeping close, saved us from this trouble, at length we arrived at the Little Arkansas, and delivered our charge over to the Mexican in safety or with only the usual casualties of broken or damaged waggon wheels, axletrees, harness, etc. and worndown Mules, but this was to be expected.

The Buffalo range

Central. U.S.A.

Leaving the Santa Fee traders to pursue their course and Captain Boone having obtained from the war department permission to take his company and endeavour to ascertain

3 lines #

1 line #

and to accurately lay down the exact Latitude and Longitude of a certain Salt Rock which had hitherto only been known to Indians who had informed Captain Boone of its existence, but no White man had ever seen it, which made its existence doubtful, to solve this doubt the curiosity and eagerness of Captain Boone was excited, This brought us to the Buffalo range, although we had seen many scattered ones still we had now to cross where herds of them pastured. And our rations were nearly exhausted, we should have to subsist principally by what we could obtain by hunting Buffalo furnishing us with a good supply, as well as much excitement, and amusement in hunting them. The supply was abundant for about 3 weeks we were in their range, Many incidents of a ludicrous and amusing character occurred, one of which was the tossing of a Man.

Man Tossed by a Buffalo

One evening camped early (that is about sunset) we soon heard a heavy rumbling sound, resembling something like underground thunder, the cause soon appeared, an immense herd of Buffalo were passing so near that the flanks of the herds would strike our camp and as in such cases they never turn out of their

course for anything less than a Mountain, rivers they would swim, the consequence was inevitable, the tents were levelled to the ground, the horses were frightened so as to break their lariats, and stampeded. The men ran each for his carbine anxious of a chance of shooting a Buffalo (for only a few of the horses could be got near to one, and the men that rode the timid horses, were pleased with the opportunity of a Shot Afoot). This caused so much cross firing, that it was wonderful that they, the men, did not kill each other, but fortunately none were killed. The result summed up 40 dead Buffalo, and one Man bruised, by being tossed (the lie that he told afterwards gave the others much amusement) But this was wanton destruction, as we did not require or could not use, 1/100th part of the meat, the rest was left to the prairie Wolves or other wild animals. For this being in August the hides are useless, as in summer the hides are bare of hair, except the head, shoulders and mane, if otherways we would not have been allowed to remain long enough to skin them. But the joke was in the lie the tosses man attempted to impose upon the credulity of the others. It was that in the ascent and descent with his carbine in his hand, that he

remembered that his carbine was capped and cocked, and that when he fell and struck the ground that the concussion would cause the cock to fall, and so explode, that he had sufficient presence of mind to take off the cap, let down the cock, this in his journey up and down. I suppose the truth to be that it was not cocked at all.

Beauty of the Prairie

Few scenes in Nature, and none in Art, can exceed the gorgeous splendour of some of the prairies, covered with flowers so bright and so innumerable in variety that I suppose one half of them have never been classified or named by botanists, and all of the Woods in the Autumn or fall, especially at the south west, the leaves of the trees brilliantly magnificent, every colour every tint of colour. Scarlet, crimson, yellow, deep Green, light Green, to sum up, all colours. The Prairies vast extent, in places with no high land or wood visible for days journey together, in other places, Mountains appearing like a blue mist from the remote distance all the pleasing to the sight. And then later in the year the prodigal profusion of fruit in the woods of the river bottoms, that is the low lands skirting the courses of rivers, in places narrow, in others wide to the extent of a mile or two. There the Grapes, Pawpaws,

Persimons, The nuts of all kinds Pecans, hazels and all others growing in the temperate zone, supplied gratification to the taste, in riding a person need only to extend his hand and reach a plenteous bunch of grapes or a large luscious Pawpaw so sweet and so refreshing and this without the trouble of dismounting.

In some places the eye is surprised, and the mind astonished at an object at a great distance, having all the appearance of an old time Feudal Baronial Castle. The imagination may easily conceive it to be one, were it not for the total impossibility that such a structure could be there. On nearing, it, its appearance changes, and on arriving close, it is discovered to be an immense Basaltic Rock, standing solitary and alone, in the midst of the prairie. The irregularities of its broken top giving the appearance of turrets, towers, chimneys, etc.

The extreme freshness of the air of the prairies is so invigorating to the human frame, as rising at the early dawn of morning, after lying down the previous night, in a state of lassitude occasioned by the exertions, the weariness and the enervating heat, and toil of the preceding day. Then on awaking, truly this fresh air indeed truly appears to

bring health, vigour, strength, power. I am aware that this may appear trite and commonplace as it is so every where, but doubly trebly so on the prairie, where probably there is neither Miasma or other foulness for so many Miles.

Small Game then hunger

On leaving the Buffalo range, our rations being exhausted, (as we had on starting but sufficient for 48 days and we had already been out more than that time) our only resource being whatever of small game we could procure. This for some time was abundant, Deer Antelope, possums, racoons, wild turkey, being the principals. Persons who only know civilized life may think it was fine living. Venison, Turkey etc. but deer meat or turkey meat without bread, vegetables, sauce or condiments of any kind except Salt (we were fortunate to have plenty of that) is not very high living but we had Natures sauce Hunger. With this kind of subsistence we considered ourselves in luck, until crossing a spot of wild barren rocky ground where no game could live, we likewise had to suffer hunger without anything to relieve it. The poor horses already much reduced, having nothing to subsist on but by browsing on a short, scrubby, unhealthy bush, the only thing that could grow there. But as this was

on our return (there had been serious talk of some accident happening to a Mule of the Waggon team so that we could have a feast of Mule meat) when after 3 day fasting, we came across a frontier village of the creek indian Nation, the petty chief of which supplied us with the best he had, corn meal and Bacon, refusing to take any payment, saying, that we were welcome as famished strangers, that when he or any of his people visited any of the forts, that they had plenty of meat given to them, by their White brothers, he seemed to think that this payment offered to him was from our own pockets, and that the food given at the forts was the gift of the person handing it to them. They did not appear to know it was a provision of the Government. The rest of the journey being through the Creek Nation we were well provided for.

We arrived at Fort Gibson after a journey of 93 days, having accomplished the purpose for which we were sent, protected the traders, and discovered, and laid down, the exact Latitude, and Longitude, of this Salt Rock, we being the first White Men that had ever seen it, our route was traced on the Maps as Captain Boone's route of 1843. The rock is now a noted land mark.

The Music of the Prairie

Although the prairies are lonely and destitute of fixed inhabitants they are not silent except when covered with snow. Myriads of insects among the grass each humming or singing in whatever manner nature has provided for them. There is a continual concert of insect voices always lively but very monotonous. But it is not all serenity or pleasure on the prairies, it has its unpleasantness and dangers as well the

Prairie on Fire

is one of these dangers, the imagination may conceive what must be its horrors. The long grass for many Miles of area, burning and spreading with rapidity according to the violence of the wind, sometimes outstripping the fastest animals, filling the air with smoke so dense as to completely obscure the view to leeward, every living being in consternation and terror. The only safety being the chance of any river or creek, that they can cross and that the fire cannot. Water courses being the only barrier to its progress many are drowned in attempting to cross, human beings more than wild animals, for it is a strange but certain fact, that of all living beings, the human is the least expert in

swimming, but when the fire approaches a settlement, or a squatter farm, it is then that although less grand, it is infinitely more disastrous. The log cabin, the fences, all the poor people possess, and themselves if they are not very active, are in danger to avoid this if they have time, they set fire to the grass immediately around their house, little by little, keeping the fire well under control to avoid danger from that of their own making, this clearing a bare space around, so that the fire from the prairie has nothing to feed upon. They call this counteracting the effects of fire by fire, Others will attempt to keep the fire from the house, by what they call fighting the fire, that is with wet blankets or anything like, try to smother it by laying these things on it, as it comes near, and stamping upon them, but this requires so much activity and severe exertion as frequently to exhaust them, and as it is seldom effectual, they and all their surroundings fall to the fury of the fire, but grander still is when the woods are on fire. The sides of the mountains, being generally covered by Woods, which when the fire reaches them, rushing spirally around the trunks of the largest trees, to the top, involving

all the underbrush, and this extending as far as the sight can reach, and probably much farther, there is the grandeur. But after the fire is extinguished, the appearance of the desolation it has caused is deplorable, underbrush, foliage, small trees, saplings, all gone, a deep black groove spirally surrounding the trunks of the giant trees, blackened ashes deep on the ground. the Black smear leaving its mark on every thing that touches it. I believe it exceeds the deplorable appearance of the ruins caused by a fire among the houses of a City.

Hail Storm

One evening in the month of August being then in Latitude 35, the weather having been sultry during the day, we encamped early, for us, we had scarce time to pitch the tents, and picket the horses, when a sudden change of temperature occurred, and in a few minutes a tremendous shower of large pieces of Ice, I cannot call it hail, it was not the pretty symmetrical, oval shaped pebbles commonly seen and called hail, but large chunks of ice, irregular in shape, with sharp points and edges, some about $\frac{1}{2}$ the size of a Man's closed fist. The shower lasting 10 or 15 minutes accompanied by a sharp North

West wind, blowing with such violence, as to level the tents to the ground, and from the blows of the chunks of Ice, to cause the horses to break their lariats, and scatter, but these were soon collected, as a well trained horse will not go far off, only scatter and run round, then return when their fright is over, but the ludicrous appearance of the Men was laughable, without exception each Man's face was bleeding profusely, the sharp points of the pieces of ice cutting into the skin of their cheeks, giving them a gory appearance but more were injured beyond the bleeding. It was no doubt the tail end of a tornado some where at the North but why it should extend so far South as the 35th parallel of Latitude is surprising.

Storms on the prairie are very frequent, and such storms, when they would cause the hair to stand on end (if it did not as the Sailors say, blow it off) and the heart to quake, of any person who is only acquainted with civilized Winds.

The freshets in the rivers, and streams, are sometimes dangerous, but as a general thing more troublesome than dangerous, often causing delays most vexatious, as very often there was no alternative but to wait until the flood subsides.

I have seen the Arkansas River, at a place where it was a

Mile wide, rise 16 feet in one summers night,

The appearance of Animals in their natural wildness, is so much preferable to seeing them pent up in cages in a menagerie or even in a Zoological Garden, here you see them as nature made them their motions are more graceful, their colour more bright, but keep your distance from some of them, the Panther, called here Pointer, Bears, black and brown, Grey Wolves from the Mountains are dangerous. Coyote or prairie wolves, and antelope, on the plains the Deer and chameleons, wild turkeys, squirrels, racoon, opossum in the Woods. Prairie fowls, Wild Swans, Pelicans, sandhill Cranes, Parakeets with their sharp shrill shriek as they rise and fly in flocks for refuge in the trees, on the approach of Man.

Prairie Wolves, will not attack a Man, or any beast that is larger than themselves, unless it is wounded, crippled, or in some way disabled, and they are in great numbers. I once saw a whole flock of them, about 30, in pursuit of a deer who could only use 3 legs, the other being I suppose broken, likely by a shot, they were running it down. But wonderful was our exemption from the bites of snakes or poisonous insects, so much as we were exposed to them, but

this was owing to the judicious, able and advice of Captain Boone, he being so well acquainted to their habits, their places of resort, their modes of attack, etc. The most to be dreaded were Rattle snakes and Centipedes of reptiles, and Tarantular spiders of insects. One day on the March, I being of the rear guard, the Main body halted as was usual if convenient for a Midday rest, we of the guard being some distance in the rear, were surprised at seeing a great flashing of Sabres among the Main body, on coming up to them we ascertained that they had dismounted in a spot where the ground was very much covered with rocks, between the trees, it was a complete den of rattle snakes, but the Men had become by practice expert in a method to their defence, but to the snakes great destruction, by having the sabre sharpened about 6 inches from the point, and knowing that the snake cannot advance more than his own length at a time, in making his attack the snake coils himself, his head in the centre, then rising up to its full height like a stick on end, throws himself towards the object of attack, which it bites if it strikes, which is not always the case, but if it does bite it is deadly poisonous, as there is no known remedy to be depended upon.

As the snake rises from his coils upright, the Man standing off at a distance more than the length of the snake, which the length of his Arm and of the sabre, enables him to do, by a dexterous horizontal cut with the sharpened point of the sabre, decapitate his snakeship, should he miss and fail the snake cannot renew the attack, until it has recoiled himself again, and by another rise and throw, advance himself. This appears strange, as when retreating, as it will on the approach of Men, if not attacked or hurt by him, so as to become enraged, he moves off by the the same motion as other snakes. They are called the most Magnanimous of animals, as they never attack without being first attacked, but this often happens by accident, for instance a person might tread upon one without seeing it, as it lays in the grass, and never attacks without giving warning by its rattles, in this we must have killed many hundreds.

The Centipede, 100 legs as its name implies, is a very deadly venomous reptile, which it is needful to avoid, but the connection of its name, with the number of its legs, is not very accurate, I do not think it is exactly 100, the number of legs appear to be according to the size of the animal.

Their bodies are from 6 to 10 inches long, legs $\frac{1}{4}$ inch the whole length of the way, the larger ones having more legs than the smaller ones. The whole of the under part of the body being all short legs, which they move with great rapidity, but being of a bright Scarlett colour, they are easily seen, as they approach, which renders them less dangerous.

But what gave us much trouble, except mosquitor, were the woodticks, which not dangerous were very annoying, little insects that would adhere to us, in passing through the wood, and in some insidious manner inset themselves through the open spaces of our clothing, and penetrate his head into the skin, leaving the rest of their body outside, there remain and suck blood, until they became inflated to 3 or 4 times their size, then the outer part would fall off, leaving the head imbedded in the skin of the person, then the poison injected would inflame the flesh, and cause a very unpleasant itching sensation for several days, This though not dangerous was very troublesome.

At the North West particularly, are to be found a small animal called the prairie dog, which in fact are not dogs at all but a species of Marmot, who burrow into the ground, each

a hole for himself, leaving a kind of mound of the earth dug out, at the mouth of the hole, upon which they sit as if watching, whenever they are not feeding on the grass surrounding them, but on the approach of any object, be it Man or beast, they immediately roll off, plunge into their cavity, and disappear so rapidly that the sight of them is about all we could obtain. After eating off all the grass of herbage on one spot, they emigrate in a body to another leaving their dog town as it is called in search of pastures new, The deserted dogtown is very dangerous to travellers, and their horses, as the holes or cavities being still open, the horses are apt to tread into them, thus break or sprain their legs or otherwise injure themselves, it is said that they will not live in captivity, that if caught and caged they fret and mope and soon die, but we never got a chance to verify this as we could never catch one alive or if we did we could not have kept it, one or two have been shot but that appeared cruel. They looked so innocent and so pretty but their meat was very delicious.

One of the most pleasant of our journeys was into Texas, it being in the month of October, when fruits of all kinds are in their prime, and the weather as good as could be desired,

for October is the finest month of the year in this climate. Captain Boone was ordered to take 40 of his company and proceed to the falls of the Brassos in western Texas, there to join a similar force of Texans, for the purpose of protection a Commission jointly of United States, and Texan governments, in holding a council with the Comanchees, in order to form a treaty with them, before starting Captin Boone expressed his opinion that it would be a journey to no purpose, as the Comanchees unlike the generality of Indians, are know to be so faithless in their promises and not to be relied upon. the general character of the Indian being, that although individually the greatest liars possible, yet their solemn word given in council is implicitly carried out, Captain Boone said the Comanchees would not be there, as their word is not to be depended upon, and his prediction proved to be correct, but it was to us a journey of pleasure, ofossing the Arkansas river, striking the deep fork of the Canadian river, following its course up its stream, then crossing the country to the Washita river, down which to its junction with red river then crossing Red river into Texas, then over the country crossing Trinity river, then over the country until we struck the Brassos river, up that river to

the falls, where the council was proposed to be held, arriving there one day before the stipulated time, waited there 14 days, but as Captain Boone had thought, no Comanchees came there, we then returned having accomplished nothing, but giving to us about 30 days of the most pleasant and agreeable Jaunt. The country after crossing Red river, being at this time of the year of exceeding beauty, the ground covered with fall flowers of the most gorgeous colours, much surpassing that north of that river, which I had before thought to be impossible, it was indeed surprise, upon surprise, and its fruitfulness was equal to its beauty. There is in the southern part of what is now Kansas, a river the name of which, at the time of which I speak, was pronounced by the white people who knew it, Mary de Zeen, but as it was spelt on the Maps or charts, in 4 or 5 different ways, so as to cause many disputes among us, as to the proper pronunciation of, or the derivation of its name, we had among us a Louisiana frenchman of pretty intelligent abilities, who once in crossing it, seeing the surface nearly covered with Wild Swans, exclaimed I know it now, it is Mer de Cygne, Sea of Swans, whether he was correct in his conjecture is some what doubtful, but it might be so. This country having been formally traversed by Canadian Voyageurs, trappers, hunters, and such

like, they in their corrupt french gave names to Mountains, and streams, so muddled up between Indian dialect, and french patois, as to render them at the present time almost unpronounceable.

Jim will Kill

On our way returning through Texas, one evening we encamped near a settlement, just began to be formed, composed of a few families of squatters, whom we found in great consternation on account of a Murder that had been committed the day before, 2 of them had quarrelled, one had beaten out the brains of the other, with a fence rail, being beyond jurisdiction or at least the power of the law, no Judges, no Sheriffs, no constables, although all deplored it, none were willing, or perhaps fearful to interfere none having authority, so they had to as they called it, "Let it Slide". The Murderer remaining unmolested among them. They in telling us of it, for they were too much excited to keep it to themselves, remarked how sorry they were for both, Murderer and Victim, that Jim the culprit was a first rate fellow, having but one slight fault, that was, "That he would Kill", the victim was a stranger to the rest, or I suppose, had he any relations among them, that, that relation would have considered it his duty to have Shot Jim, then Jims friends would have Shot him and so on to the extermination of all the Men of the weakest side

But Jim would Kill

The Comanchees were at this time, the most wild, the most fierce, and the most uncontrollable, of all the Indian tribes, refusing all attempts to civilize, or even to moderate them, indulging in their own unconstrained freedom, going where they liked, and when they liked, scouring the wilds free and untrammelled, as it was difficult to catch them except in small numbers, who pleading that as they were not chiefs, they could not make treaties, and that they could not control the others to come to a council with us, in this way they cunningly avoided any Census being taken of them, for they had an object in keeping us ignorant of their numbers. They exaggerating it incredibly, as they thought to intimidate the U.S. by their pretended Multiplicity one instance of their duplicity, was in their failing to meet the Joint Commission, at the falls of the Brassos. They lived as best they could. Catching wild horses almost whenever they liked, they seldom, or never, it might be said, Walked. They required no saddles or harness makers among them, with a single thong of raw hide from their hand and tied to the horses lip, they were equipt, no saddle, or stirrups, and as horsemen none could exceed them. They had a practice of laying themselves flat on the backs of the horse, so as not to be seen by their enemies on approaching, in fact

hiding themselves by the horse, or what was more skillfull still, in order to avoid the arrows or bullets of their assailants, would lay themselves paralell with the sides of the horse the opposite side to their enemies, making a rampart of the poor horses body to save themselves, if the horse was killed he could easily lasso another wild one, their method of this was very simple, but required much expertness, by a slight of hand they after the horse is lassoed, cause a loop of the lasso to twine around the wild horses feet, which throws him down, they then mount him, get him up, break him, by riding him until from sheer weakness the horse falls, then he is conquered.

The following incident occurred at Fort Gibson in 1843

A party of Delaware Indians brought to the Fort a white boy, which they said they had obtained from the Comanchees, the boy being held as a prisoner by them, in exchange for a horse which they valued at 40 dollars, and knowing that the government of the U.S. were willing to redeem any White person held by Indians, and pay a mansom for their release, they had given the horse for the boy, and brought him to the Fort, demanding 40 dollars to reimburse them for their horse. It might be so, but none of us believed it, Of hwat use was a horse to them, who had so many of their own, or could catch as many Wild ones as they could wish

we thought the probability to be, that they had had an encounter with them the Comanchees, and had taken the boy from them, but in whatever way they got him, it was well to get the boy even by the sacrifice of 40 dollars which was paid to them, The Commanders of Posts, being allowed by the Government to pay releases money in such cases, besides it acts as an inducement to the Indians or they would keep them more secluded, so that they could not be found, and so never reclaimed, but the boy was delivered to the Authorities at the Fort, he was apparently about 10 years old, he had forgotten whatever of English he might have ever had known, could only utter some of the Comanchee dialect, so could not give any intimation of his origin, or where he came from, but he was unmistakably White, he cried very much on the Delawares leaving him, as they said he had on leaving the Comanchees, but in a few days he became reconciled, and commenced lassoing the washer womens chickens and with a bow and arrow, he had made, would pick off and kill any particular one that was pointed out to him of the flock. To lasso or to shoot with bow and arrow was all the same to him, he was expert with

either. We made for him clothes of our old ones, but the greatest trouble was to get him to wear shoes, at last we got some girls light shoes from the settler store, thus gradually bringing him somewhat, into the shape of a little Christian. He remained at the Fort about 6 months, when an old but very respectable looking Man came, he had heard that a White boy, taken from the Comanchees was there, and had come to examine, and if found to be the one, that he was in search of to claim it. The story he told was, that, 5 years before he had emigrated and settled in Texas with his son and daughter in law with 2 children a boy and a girl, that one night in his absence their log cabin was attacked, and burnt by a party of Comanchees who murdered the son and his wife, and carried off the 2 children, That he had spent more than 2 thirds of his time since then in travelling about going wherever he was advised wild goose chase or not, in order to find the children but without success. He mentioned some marks that was upon the body of the boy we had. After much consideration, the Commander of the Post, Lt. Co. R. B. Mason of our regiment, consented to give up the boy to this person, although no other evidence could be got at, besides this Mans assertions, which were supported by the Marks on the body, then occurred more crying and difficulty at his parting with us.

After more than 4 years and half of this kind of life, I began to think that I had enough of it, and to wish once more to reside among civilized people, brick houses, paved streets lighted by gaslight and was glad when my enlistment expired. I was at Fort Gibson, when the time arrived, and on the 11th of December 1844, punctual to the day a full statement of my accounts with the government, having been drawn out and audited, I was discharged. The paymaster happening to be at the Fort at the time, I was fortunate in that, as he cashed the duplicates in full, so I was not compelled to submit to a discount, which I should have had to do, had he not been there. A comrade who enlisted 3 days after me, and of course discharged 3 days after me, we agreed to be still farther companions, and to travel together Eastward, as far as our respective ways led. Then the difficulty presented itself of how to get away, by steam boat on the river would have been the most convenient method, but there had been a great drought in the Arkansas river, (and indeed in all the rivers having their source at the North West) that Steamboats could only ascend it 100 miles, and the Neosho river upon which Fort Gibson is situated, it empties in the Arkansas, is 700 miles up it, so another land journey was the only resource, the best way to accomplish this was the next

consideration to purchase Indian ponies was one way, but then on arriving in a more settled country, after riding them between 3 and 400 miles, they would be so reduced as to be unsaleable, without refreshing them by grazing for weeks, The saddles and bridles would be reduced in value, especially as we should have to buy where the price was high, and to sell where price was low, besides the depreciation of their being second hand, it would almost be a total loss. There was a person a white Nan, who having married a Cherokee woman, and was in consequence privileged to reside in, and enjoy all the rights of a Native Cherokee, in their Nation, in the right of his wife. He carrying on the business of harness making, was about to send to Booneville, on the Missouri, for stock for his trade, he had a waggon covered and on springs and 2 very serviceable horses, we engaged with him to carry us there, paying him 8 dollars each, to be sure this was not much for a ride of 340 miles, but he had to send his waggon anyhow, so this 16 dollars was clear gain, but it was not so cheap to us as the result proved. The numerous break downs of the rickety old Waggon, which we would have to assist in repairing such as it was, binding its broken parts together with anything that came to hand, hickory withes being the principals, until we could come to a blacksmith Xshop of Wheelwrights, Walking great

part of the way. This delayed us more than double the time we ought to have been. But the amusement and fun of the journey full compensated us for the delay. The country being too sparse of population for taverns to be established we were obliged to put up at night at any settlers farm we came to, which in some cases were 17 miles apart, but would willingly entertain any passer by, of course it was only a log cabin, and the fare, true backwood fare. After 12 days journeying thus, we arrived at Booneville and found the Missouri river, to be as low as the Arkansas, that we had left. No boats running, but a stage route had been improvised, and that was our only chance of proceeding to St. Louis. After remaining on to rest, we took passage in the stage, which occupied 2 days and half in the journey of 180 miles, started at 3 in the morning of the first of January 1845, and put up for the night at 3 o'clock in the afternoon at Jefferson City, to start at 3 next morning, but on account as the stage agent said of the driver going to a wedding and getting drunk did not start until 5 so that we were 2 hours behind time, at the places where it was designed we should stop for meals. The meals had been 2 hours waiting, but the journey was continued this time though the night. The road in many places just cut through the primeval forest,

stumps of trees left standing, some 2 or 3 feet high. No bridges over the rivers, of which there were 2 on the route, the Gasconade and the Big Osage, these were crossed by the stage coach on flat boats. Arrived at St. Louis on the 3rd about noon, remained until the 7th stopping at the City Hotel, (where for a joke I registered our names as late of the U.S. army) My companion going on the 6th by steam boat to New Orleans, me to Louisville Kentucky on the 7th. On the forenoon of the 7th while sitting in the cabin of the waiting for it to start, I was surprised at seeing Col. Kearney enter the cabin, and seeing me, walking directly towards me, saluted me, shook hands, and told me, that having business at the City Hotel, he had called there, and was informed by the landlord, Mr. Lovejoy, that 2 gentlemen of his regiment had been stopping there, that one had gone the day before to New Orleans, and that the other gentleman (that was me) had gone that morning on board the West Wind steamboat, which had not started yet. That he on looking at the register had recognized, who we were, and that with a smile at the (late of the U.S. army) he had come to bid me good bye, asking what I intended doing in future, on me telling him that I intended, working at my trade, he said how pleased he was to know of anyone who had been under his command doing well on their return to civil life. That he was well satisfied with my conduct, while in the regiment, (he did not know everything)

This I considered a high compliment, for a Colonel then doing the duty of a General in charge of the Department, to take the trouble to walk 7 or 8 blocks through the dirty streets and dirtier Quays of St. Louis, to bid farewell to a person who had been only of the rank and file of his regiment. It must have been kind feelings and not interested motives that actuated him.

Thus ended my first Campaign